

One of Ten Nationally



The Ramsey County Adult Substance Abuse Court (ASAC) Program was recently selected by the National Drug Court Institute as one of ten Adult Mentor Courts in the United States. The Court was awarded a plaque by Cynthia Herriott, Deputy Director of the National Drug Court Institute on September 23, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in courtroom 131B of the Ramsey County Courthouse. ASAC will serve as a model court program and play a significant role in drug court training, technical assistance and research.

What began as a pilot program on October 31, 2002, is now an institutionalized business practice within the court system. The program has had 338 participants and 111 graduates since it began. The Adult Substance Abuse Court has been able to successfully provide a highly structured environment to program participants which promotes sobriety, self-sufficiency and decreased criminal behaviors in a strength-based, supportive approach. By providing this type of collaboration, intensive treatment and monitoring, we can effectively reduce recidivism and enhance public safety.

The ASAC program is funded by the Legislature through State Court Administration, Federal grants, Department of Human Services and also by matches with court partners, including other criminal justice agencies, which provide staff positions. Collaboration with court partners continues to be a cost-effective strategy that utilizes budgets in a more comprehensive, cohesive manner.

A successful recovery from addiction often hinges on the ability to address many aspects of an individual's life, including mental health. A unique feature to the Ramsey County court program is the Psychiatric Court Clinic, which provides in-house mental health screening, assessment, case planning, medication management and referral to community services.

The ASAC program is currently presided over by Judge Joanne Smith, who co-chaired the Minnesota Supreme Court Chemical Dependency Task Force. In its final

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report, the Task Force offered recommendations to the Supreme Court and Judicial Council on how to more effectively handle cases affected by issues related to alcohol and other drug addiction through the use of problem-solving approaches, such as drug courts. Minnesota's courts have established specialized drug courts as a key strategy to increase public safety, improve life outcomes for defendants, and save taxpayer dollars. Using the coercive power of the courts with appropriate treatment and monitoring services, drug courts have been found to reduce recidivism and assist offenders in finding the help they need to achieve sobriety and to get their lives back on track.